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## DPI VISTA Monthly

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### Save the Dates!

**August 10:**  
Close of Service Webinar

**August 13:**  
Exit Survey/Reflection Piece Due  
(required for August-start VISTAs)

**August 21:**  
Last Day of Service for August-09' VISTAs  
Last day to submit future plans form  
(required for August-start VISTAs)



## Words from the Wise: Veteran VISTAs Coach the New

By Ruth Anne Landsverk

Late summer means that our wonderful corps of experienced VISTAs will soon embark on new adventures, with new VISTAs poised to start their year of service. What do the veteran VISTAs wish they knew about starting and sustaining a successful Partnership Action Team when they began their service one (sometimes, two) years ago? We recently asked a few of them, and here's a summary of what they said:

1. **Read Joyce Epstein's *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action* and *Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships*** by Anne Henderson, et al. Read them, keep them handy, and refer to them often. They will be your "Partnership Primers" useful throughout the year.

2. **Get to know the teachers, what they need, and how you can help** them involve families. One VISTA said her biggest surprise was discovering how time-starved teachers, administrators, and other school staff were. They came to rely on her for partnership ideas, volunteers, and re-

sources. In turn, several teachers became staunch supporters and promoters of school partnership efforts.

3. **Fill your Partnership Action Team with folks passionate** about your goal: strengthening the involvement of all families in your school to help children be successful learners. They're there -- on staff, in the community, and at home. Find them and your job will be easier.



4. **Be prepared to explain -- quickly** -- what a Partnership Action Team is, and how it benefits students, families, and the school, and how everyone can help. This is the DPI VISTA's "elevator speech," a short spiel to help total strangers understand what you do in the time it takes

an elevator to get to your floor. Make sure all who cross your path (or ride your elevator) can understand it.

5. **Make friends with Uncertainty**, at least for a while. Be assured that every VISTA site's needs are unique, and that you won't figure out what they are for a while. To get there faster, ask questions, introduce yourself, talk to lots of people, and use that fabulous brain to figure out where the gaps are. Uncertainty will soon be replaced by better friends, like Capacity, Conviction, and Confidence.

6. **Use your resources!** Attend local or nearby trainings and in-services. Explore how your supervisor and fellow staff members can help your Partnership Action Team. Invite a community member to be on your team and use his/her knowledge of community groups and businesses to support partnership events. Use the staff and online resources at DPI to get your questions answered. Personal food resource tip: sign up for the Food Share program at <http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/foodshare/index.htm>.

# It's Up to You...and you...and you...and you!

by Betsy Prueter

At the end of June I traveled to New York City for the 2010 National Conference on Volunteering and Service, co-convened by Points of Light Institute and the Corporation for National and Community Service. This is one of the biggest gatherings of service leaders (over 5,000) in the country, and the energy and enthusiasm from other AmeriCorps and VISTA staff, nonprofit directors, and volunteer coordinators was infectious and helped me to once again see how our work fits into a national picture of social justice and reform. Mayor Bloomberg welcomed the attendees on the first day in Radio City Music Hall and reminded us that "in this time of great social and economic challenge, the conference's theme of *It's Up to You* could not be more relevant. Government simply cannot do it alone, and the entrepreneurial organizations you lead and the volunteers you engage can continue to make a critical difference." The message of collaboration is one we hear all the time- and rightly so- but this was different. This message conveyed the urgency of collaboration and reform.

Given the message, the keynote speakers (among them Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education), and the workshops sessions, I developed a list of *It's Up to You* Challenges for us all to consider.

## 1. Enough with the reinventing of the wheel already.

*Perhaps nothing new. But we (unintentionally) do this a lot. But the time it takes for us to reinvent the wheel might be better spent really investigating best practices and other models.*

## 2. Duplication duplication of services is costly and ineffective

*During my own service as a VISTA in Massachusetts. I worked a lot with an affordable housing coalition. And guess what, we were one of TWELVE housing advocacy groups in the area. We all competed for the same grant funds and we all served the same population. We could have been much more effective if we figured out what gaps existed and filled those rather than duplicating other quality programs.*

## 3. Partnerships make the world go round

*Sure, you probably wish you had a dollar for each time I used the word partnerships. But the assets, talents, and passion of our partners are incredible! To make a big difference, we need each other. To make a small difference, we need each other.*

## 4. Show me the Money (or not, it doesn't really matter either way)

*We don't always need funds to do this work. They help; they may even ensure sustainability but if we keep waiting around for money to make change, we may be waiting forever. Let's get creative and be resourceful!*

## 5. A (big) picture is worth a million words

*Next time you don't really get the point of what you're doing, STOP. Figure it out. Talk to your supervisor, talk to your partners. Think about how it connects to anti poverty. And if it doesn't? Re-tool, re-group, or move on!*



## Erica's Corner

by Erica Spurgeon

As my time here ends I wonder how these last 2 years of my AmeriCorps VISTA experience

went by so quickly. I think of all the hundreds of people I met. All the people I taught and inspired and the people who taught and inspired me. How living a simple life can be the most rewarding. How you forget about your own problems because you're worried about helping someone else. As I begin my journey into the "real world" (or so my parents call it) I thought about the things that made me proud to realize that I wasn't just a college graduate from a small town looking for a job that helped others; I was an AmeriCorps VISTA.

## Top 10 Ways you know you are a VISTA:

1. You have a 30 second blurb ready to explain what an AmeriCorps VISTA is.
2. Your library card is just as important as your credit card.
3. You realize the world doesn't revolve around you.
4. You know the coolest icebreaking/team building games.
5. You have multiple uses for toilet paper rolls.
6. You know about all the free services and activities in your area and take advantage of them all.
7. You're worried about sustainability.
8. Your friends and family wonder how you live on such little amounts of money.
9. The same friends and family wonder how they can become an AmeriCorps VISTA.
10. The satisfaction of helping someone is worth more than all the money in the world.

Even though these seem like simple ideas and even common sense to us they may not be for those who have not had the opportunity to be a VISTA. Even though my time is up I will continue to live by the things I have learned. So, promote us, promote yourself, and be proud.

## Recipe of the Month: No Bake Veggie Pizza

By Betsy Prueter

### Ingredients:

1 cup broccoli, chopped  
1 cup cabbage, sliced thin  
½ cup carrots, shredded  
¼ cup scallions, diced  
1 tbsp. fennel fronds (tops), minced  
2 tbsp. garlic, minced  
2 cups spinach or arugula  
½ cup cream cheese  
4 pita rounds  
2 tbsp. olive oil  
2 tsp. lemon juice  
Salt and pepper, to taste  
¼ cup toasted almonds (optional)

1. Sauté garlic in olive oil for 2 minutes. Add greens until wilted and set aside to cool.
2. Mix fennel fronds into cream cheese.
3. Mix the broccoli, cabbage, carrots, scallions, toasted almonds (optional), cooled garlic, and greens with the olive oil and lemon juice.
4. Salt and pepper to taste.
5. Spread cream cheese evenly onto four pitas.
6. Spread veggies mixture evenly onto the four pitas.
7. Cut into fourths and enjoy!

Betsy says, "It's one of my favorite summer treats! You can do a LOT of substitutions with this recipe! Change up the vegetables, or use tortillas instead of pita—the possibilities are endless!"



## "Hey! That's a good idea!"

**Nicole Stachurski**, VISTA with Grove Elementary School in Wisconsin Rapids, helped put together an anti-bullying DVD to send home to parents called "There is No Bullying at Grove Elementary," as a family-friendly tool to use at home. The DVD is meant to complement and expand on classroom discussions of school bullying in home settings.

### PARENTING

**Ellen Carpenter**, VISTA with the Madison Metropolitan School District, had her first Action Team meeting to draft a mission statement for parent involvement, set a summer action plan, schedule future meeting dates, and to set up a parent leadership structure for next year.

### DECISION MAKING

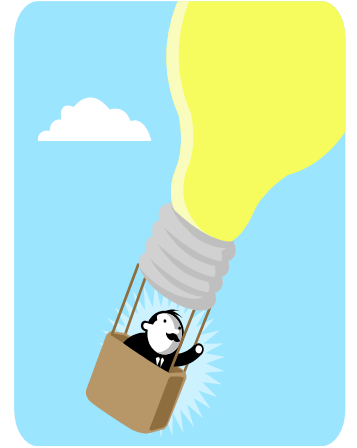
**Stephanie Dorman**, VISTA with West Allis/West Milwaukee School District, has been working on organizing the an adult education program. She partnered with the Milwaukee Achiever Literacy Services to provide ESL and computer literacy classes to families at her school.

### COLLABORATING

**Josh Cowles**, VISTA with the Fond du Lac Public Library, worked with the summer VISTAs to plan and present a Money Smart U program titled "When I'm 65" on how to plan for retirement. Over 30 people were in attendance.

### FINANCIAL LITERACY

**Lizzy Lowrey**, VISTA with the Racine Public Library, has been working with the

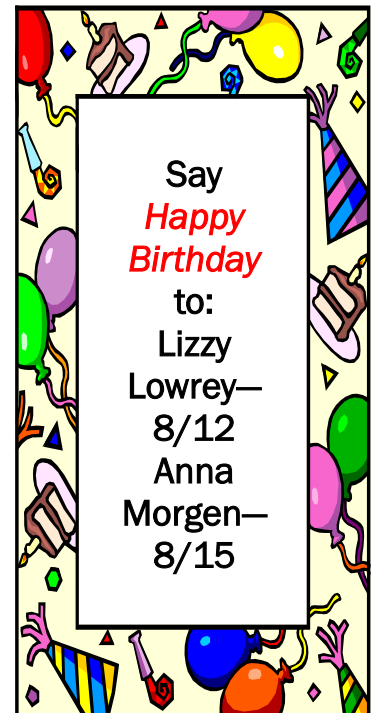


city of Racine on a city-wide job assistance project/network with multiple locations for different job help resources and training. While the library undergoes a major construction project, community members will still be able to access its services.

### EMPLOYMENT AND JOB SKILLS TRAINING

## Goodbye and Good Luck to:

Sara Byrnes  
Pen Bruskin  
Abby Churchill  
Colleen Douglass  
Sarah Glassman  
Jim Handorf  
Sara Hubin  
Heather Knops  
Lizzy Lowrey  
Anna Morgen  
Hannah Schulz  
Cara Slingerland  
Erica Spurgeon



# Kick-off a Great Year!

By Renee Pasewald, DPI VISTA 2008-2009

The paid trip to PSO is over, and the free meals and plush hotel rooms have been replaced with food stamps and energy assistance applications. Welcome, new VISTAs, to your year of service! Given the wide range of sites the DPI VISTA project hosts, it is not unusual to feel a little lost after the PSO rug has been unceremoniously torn out from under you. Here are some tips to get you going these first few days and throughout the year.

1. Attend every meeting and site event you can right from Day One. True, the topics may not always be relevant to your assignment and you may not know exactly what to do, but being a constant visible presence among the staff shows them that you are just as committed to the site as they are. This in turn will help them get to know you better and take your efforts seriously.
2. Brag. As a behind the scenes specialist, much of what VISTA does many not be immediately apparent to the people you are working with. So forward your bi-weekly reports to the staff. Write up your recent achievements in the site's newsletter. Talk about what you've been doing at staff meetings. No matter how you do it, share, share, share.
3. Eat in the staff lounge and attend staff social events whenever you can. This does not go unnoticed. Like attending meetings, eating and socializing with everyone will make you more connected to the staff, which makes collaborating with them much easier!
4. Take advantage of every training, conference, seminar, retreat, and professional development opportunity the DPI or your site has to offer. Mileage and lodging are covered, meals are free, and you have a chance to reconnect with other VISTAs across the state. It's a great change of scenery that will keep you refreshed, focused, and energized at your site.
5. Serve one day at a time. Many sites have broad or vague visions that can be difficult to make sense of. Break down the big projects into small, manageable tasks that are more realistic. One phone call. One letter. One conversation. You may not always be able to do everything, but that's okay, because you can always do something. So find something you can do, and do it! It does add up!

Finally, keep in mind that the staff needs buy-in from you just as much as you need buy-in from them in order to work together productively. Be open to their advice and ideas, too!

## Welcome New VISTAs!

*We'd like to extend a warm welcome to our new VISTAs who will begin their service this summer. We look forward to working with them to build strong partnerships across the state.*

**Bethany Bridges**, Racine Unified School District  
**Emily Caragianis**, Cunningham Elementary School, Beloit  
**Angie Domagalski**, Parents Plus, Milwaukee  
**Kristen Donat**, Parents Plus, Milwaukee  
**Heather Keyes**, Indian Community School, Franklin  
**Kathy Lewis**, Ashland High School  
**Emily Minerath**, Madison Public Library  
**Amber Richardson**, Racine Public Library  
**Amanda Shapiro**, West Allis-West Milwaukee School District  
**Michael Valente**, Parents Plus, Milwaukee  
**Amanda Vandehey**, Wausau School District  
**Katrina Waldron**, Madison Metropolitan School District



**Angela Rumsey is currently serving with Milwaukee Public Schools and Parents Plus, Inc.**

**Cara:** When did you decide you wanted to be a VISTA?

**Angela:** The summer before my senior year of college, I had no idea what I wanted to do after graduation other than the vague goal of working with disadvantaged communities, whether here or abroad. I came across AmeriCorps as a partner of a grad school program I was looking at, and after some research I decided that not only did this sound way more fun than going back to school right away, but it also would be a great way to get some experience and narrow down my interests. I was right about the experience, but my interests have expanded, if anything!

**Cara:** If you could invent anything new, what would it be?

**Angela:** Easy, a teleportation device. I'm usually a crabby, bitter traveler and just want to get to where I'm going and not waste the time. Plus it would be awesome to be able to call someone and say "Hey, I'm craving some Indian food. Meet me in Punjab in 20 minutes?"

**Cara:** What show from TGIF, ABC's Friday night comedy block airing from about 1989-1998, influenced your life most and why?

**Angela:** Boy Meets World. The show's comedy and life lessons are both timeless and priceless.



## VISTA to VISTA with Angela Rumsey and Cara Slingerland

"Life's tough, get a helmet"? Solid gold.

**Cara:** What motivated you to sign up for a second year of this VISTA project?

**Angela:** This year was such a challenge to get things going at the district level for Milwaukee Public Schools, and in some ways I feel like all I did was the prep work for things to get started next year. I'm not quite ready to give up on that work and hand it over to someone else. Not to mention I'm still not sure what I want to do after VISTA...

**Cara:** If you could have dinner with any three people, dead or alive, who would they be?

**Angela:** Jeffrey Sachs for the conversation, Mitch Hedberg for some laughs, and Iron Chef Masaharu Morimoto for his Asian-European fusion culinary style. I bet his sushi is outstanding.

**Cara:** If you could live anywhere in the world where would it be?

**Angela:** I doubt this will surprise anyone – Uganda. It's beautiful, the cultures are rich, and the people are unbelievably welcoming. I have plenty of



friends and connections there... but I'd miss my people from this side of the world! And I'm not sure my fluffy little dog would enjoy the equatorial heat.

**Cara:** What are you reading right now and how does it tie

into the VISTA values of sustainability and capacity building? Choose one value and expound on it in 100 words or less.

**Angela:** I'm currently reading The Lord of the Rings trilogy, which is all about bringing all the stakeholders of a community together to achieve a common goal by utilizing everyone's expertise. They learn a lot along their journey and become stronger members of society as a result. While originally aided by elves, dwarves, wizards, and men, the hobbits eventually are empowered enough to lead an uprising on their own and take control of their own community. And isn't that what VISTA is all about?

**Cara:** Describe your first year in Milwaukee in 5 words.

**Angela:** Can't wait for year two!



**Cara Slingerland is currently serving at SUPAR/BEAM and Parents Plus, Inc in Milwaukee.**

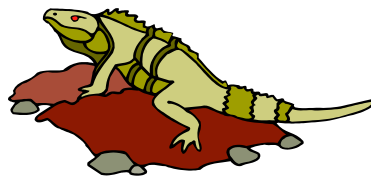
**Angela:** Describe your hometown in 5 words.

**Cara:** I'm taking liberties and writing two, six word memoirs (ala Hemingway) about my hometown of Lemont, Illinois: 1. Limestone quarries, cookie-cutter houses, bored teenagers.

2. Access to Chicago by train; miles further.

**Angela:** If you could have any animal companion that was completely trained and loyal to you, what type of animal would you choose and why?

**Cara:** I always wish they would rescue reptiles at the humane society, and not only cute, furry things. Maybe they do at the humane society in Florida. But if



Wisconsin took note, I would adopt a pet iguana that I could walk around on a leash. Plus, iguanas are vegetarians, so it would appreciate my cooking.

**Angela:** Which character from Saved by the Bell do you most relate to?

**Cara:** Probably Tori Scott, the "tough" girl who appeared in the middle of the final season. Her toughness is signified by her leather jacket, because one would have to be tough to wear such a jacket in sunny California. She joined the show when the girls who played Kelly and Jessie wouldn't resign their contracts. However, they filmed the graduation episode before Kelly and Jessie sadly departed SBTB, so Tori was there for most of senior year, but was never shown graduating. I switched high schools my junior year, so much like her, I just appeared in the middle of the "season." Unlike her, I graduated high school because I wasn't a victim of lazy script writing and poor production.

**Angela:** If you won a billion dollars, who would you share it with?

**Cara:** I'd share two million with some of my friends because

they could be freed up creatively if they didn't have to work soul-sucking 9-5 jobs. I'd keep another million and buy a house somewhere in a warm climate. With the other 997 million I would set up a foundation similar to the MacArthur Foundation, which awards grants to people doing innovative work, but this foundation would be education-specific, needs based, and world-wide.

**Angela:** Tell me your favorite G-rated joke.

**Cara:** (stolen from a popsicle stick) Q: what goes 99...clunk, 99...clunk, 99...clunk?

A: a centipede with a wooden leg

**Angela:** If you could have a really mundane superpower, what would you want it to be?

**Cara:** An uncanny ability to build furniture and architecture. Furniture because I hate moving, and architecture because most buildings are incredibly boring to look at. Why aren't there more purple and/or 3D polka dot skyscrapers?

**Angela:** If you could have one canceled TV show come back for one more season, which show would you choose?

**Cara:** My So-Called Life was before it's time, and because of that, was canceled way too early. If it had a longer run, then Jordan Catalano could still be on TV. Jared Leto would potentially still be attractive and not the grease ball of a rock star he is today.

**Angela:** What awesome skill, experience, or personality trait do you have that helped you be successful as a VISTA?

**Cara:** Two personality traits I used this year were being resilient and injecting some fun into everything I did. Whether or not these helped me to be successful remains to be seen!

# Nutrition Education

*By Jill Camber Davidson, Nutrition Education Consultant at DPI*

You know that healthy eating does make a difference in student behavior and academic achievement. The students you work with, however, may not realize what they eat can affect both short term and long term health. Through nutrition education, students gain a better understanding how food affects them, and what are healthy food options. Nutrition education happens everywhere, from home to school, from the classroom and the lunchroom to the playground, busline and afterschool activities, so the opportunities are endless to promote healthy food choices. In addition, home and school wellness are interconnected, and as a VISTA, you can take an active role in the nutrition education in your school and community.

To help you promote healthy eating and nutrition, information will be provided in this Newsletter from WI Team Nutrition. You can get more information on what's happening in Wisconsin by visiting the site, <http://dpi.wi.gov/ne/index.html>. Team Nutrition is a program from USDA to encourage healthy eating in our youth.

As a VISTA, you are a role model for youth. For more information, role modeling workshops have been made available from WI Team Nutrition and the Milwaukee Nutrition and Physical Activity Coalition, and a guide is available online. Visit [www.city.milwaukee.gov/MCNPACRoleModelingActionGuide](http://www.city.milwaukee.gov/MCNPACRoleModelingActionGuide) to download the guide.

There are currently opportunities for you with Team Nutrition – contact Jill if you'd like more information:

- If you work with Pre K/child care, mini-grants for nutrition education are available.
- If you work with elementary students and parents and are interested in hosting a family food fair night in September, please contact Jill soon. This opportunity will be gone fast!

For more information, please contact:

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Nutrition Education Consultant  
Wisconsin Dept. of Public Instruction  
125 S. Webster Street  
Madison, WI 53707-7841  
[jill.camberdavidson@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:jill.camberdavidson@dpi.wi.gov)  
608.264.6700  
<http://dpi.wi.gov/ne/index.html>

## Snapshots from the VISTA Retreat at Devil's Lake



# August 2010

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10 Introduction to Soft Skills: SMART Goals @ Urban League Office—Madison 1:00—2:00p	11	12	13	14
15 Science on Wheels w/UW-Madison Education Outreach and Partnerships @ UW-Madison	16 Science on Wheels w/UW-Madison Education Outreach and Partnerships @ UW-Madison	17 Science on Wheels w/UW-Madison Education Outreach and Partnerships @ UW-Madison	18 Science on Wheels w/UW-Madison Education Outreach and Partnerships @ Kettle Moraine State Park	19 Science on Wheels w/UW-Madison Education Outreach and Partnerships @ Kettle Moraine State Park	20 Science on Wheels w/UW-Madison Education Outreach and Partnerships @ Kettle Moraine State Park	21 <b>Last Day of Service for August 2009—start VISTAs</b>
22	23	24	25	26 Resumes and the Job Search/Master the Interview @ East Madison Community Center—Madison 5:00—7:00p	27	28
29	30	31				

## EVENT CONTACTS

- For more information on the Science on Wheels program, contact Abby Churchill at [churchill@wisc.edu](mailto:churchill@wisc.edu).
- For more information on the other events in Madison, contact Jim Handorf at [handorf@uwalumni.com](mailto:handorf@uwalumni.com).

*“When you live for a strong purpose, then hard work isn’t an option. It’s a necessity.”*

**Steve Pavlina**



## Grant Opportunities

### Open Meadows Foundation: Grants for Women and Girls

The Open Meadows Foundation is a grant-making organization for projects that are led by and benefit women and girls. It funds projects that reflect the diversity of the community served by the project in both its leadership and organization; that build community power; that promote racial, social, economic, and environmental justice; and that have limited financial access or have encountered obstacles in their search for funding. Maximum award: \$2,000. Eligibility: 501(c)3 organizations with an organizational budget no larger than \$150,000. Projects must be designed and implemented by women and girls.

Deadline: August 14, 2010

[www.openmeadows.org](http://www.openmeadows.org)

### Siemens/College Board: 2010 Siemens Competition

The Siemens Competition seeks to promote excellence by encouraging students to undertake individual or team research projects. It fosters intensive research that improves students' understanding of the value of

scientific study and informs their consideration of future careers in mathematics, science, engineering, and technology. Maximum award: \$100,000. Eligibility: high school students who are U.S. citizens or permanent residents.

Deadline: October 1, 2010

[www.collegeboard.com/siemens/](http://www.collegeboard.com/siemens/)

### Wild Ones: Lorrie Otto Seeds for Education Grant Program

The Lorrie Otto Seeds for Education Grant Program gives small monetary grants to schools, nature centers, or other non-profit educational organizations for the purpose of establishing outdoor learning centers. Funds will be provided only for the purchase of native plants and seed. Eligibility: schools, nature centers, and other nonprofit and not-for-profit places of learning, including houses of worship.

Deadline: October 15, 2010

[www.for-wild.org/seedmony.htm](http://www.for-wild.org/seedmony.htm)

### Vernier/NSTA: Technology Awards

The Vernier/NSTA Technology Awards promote the innovative use of data-collection technology using a computer, graphing calculator, or other handheld device in the science classroom. Maximum award: \$1,000 in cash for the teacher, \$1,000 in Vernier Products, and up to \$1,000

toward expenses to attend the annual NSTA National Convention. Eligibility: Current teachers of science in grades K-College.

Deadline: November 30, 2010

[www.vernier.com/grants/nsta.html](http://www.vernier.com/grants/nsta.html)

### Barbara Bush Foundation: Grants for Literacy

The Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy's grant-making program seeks to develop or expand projects designed to support the development of literacy skills for adult primary caregivers and their children. Maximum award: \$65,000. Eligibility: organizations with current nonprofit or public status in existence for two or more years as of the date of the application that have maintained fiscal accountability and operated an instructional literacy program in existence for at least two years that includes one or more of the following components: literacy for adults; parent education; pre-literacy or literacy instruction for children pre-K to grade 3; intergenerational literacy activities (Parent and Child Together Time [PACT]).

Deadline: September 10, 2010

[www.barbarabushfoundation.com/site/c.jhLSK2PALmF/b.4425435/k.544A/Curent\\_Funding\\_Opportunities.htm](http://www.barbarabushfoundation.com/site/c.jhLSK2PALmF/b.4425435/k.544A/Curent_Funding_Opportunities.htm)

### Lowe's Charitable and Educational Foundation: Toolbox for Education Grant



Lowe's Toolbox for Education grant program funds school improvement projects initiated by parents in recognition of the importance of parent involvement in education. Maximum award: \$5,000. Eligibility: K-12 schools (including charter, parochial, private, etc.) or parent groups (associated with a non-profit K-12 school).

Deadline: October 15, 2010

<http://toolboxforeducation.com/>

*"Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence."*

**Helen Keller**

